

Message Text

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46

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5865

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS, US

SUBJECT: KOREAN INTEREST IN PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

REF: STATE 193338; SEOUL 5747

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS SEPT 5, PRIMIN KIM CHONG-PIL AND FONMIN KIM DONG-JO REITERATED ROKG FEELING THAT IT IMPERATIVE PRESIDENT FORD ALSO VISIT KOREA IN EVENT HE VISITS JAPAN. FONMIN STRESSED THAT CURRENT ROK/JAPAN TENSIONS MADE VISIT ALL MORE IMPORTANT FROM ROK VIEWPOINT. PRIMIN SAID ROKG WOULD HAVE ALL DOMESTIC POLITICAL OBSTACLES ELIMINATED BY TIME OF VISIT AND EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS VISIT WASHINGTON HIMSELF TO CONVEY ASSURANCES, WHICH CHARGE DISCOURAGED. BOTH INDICATED ROKG INCLINED REINFORCE ITS CASE BY SENDING FORMAL INVITATION. END SUMMARY.

1. IN CALL ON FONMIN, CHARGE PASSED REFTEL MESSAGE EXACTLY AS FORMULATED. FONMIN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION AND, AFTER SPECULATING ON ACCURACY OF PRESS REPORTS INDICATING STRONG LIKELIHOOD THAT PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO JAPAN WOULD TAKE PLACE, SAID HE THOUGHT IT BEST TO SEND FORMAL INVITATION FOR VISIT TO ROK. FONMIN ALSO REFERRED TO LIKELIHOOD OF LEFTIST PROTESTS AGAINST GOJ, ITS ALIGNMENT WITH US, AND PRESIDENTIAL PRESENCE DURING
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JAPAN VISIT, AND SAID THAT IN CONTRAST ROKG COULD ASSURE

PRESIDENT OF WARM AND ENTHUSIASTIC WELCOME. HE MADE SPECIAL POINT THAT CURRENT ROK/JAPAN TENSIONS WOULD ADD TO SEVERITY ROK DISAPPOINTMENT IF USG WERE TO ANNOUNCE JAPAN TRIP WITHOUT INCLUDING KOREA. DURATION OF KOREAN VISIT WOULD NOT BE IMPORTANT; EVEN OVERNIGHT STOP WOULD SERVE SYMBOLIC PURPOSE, ALTHOUGH ROKG WOULD PREFER LONGER STAY.

2. PRIMIN RAISED SUBJECT IN DISCUSSION LATER SAME AFTERNOON. HE RECALLED THAT WHEN HE VISITED WASHINGTON FOR MEMORIAL SERVICE ON DEATH OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN, PRESIDENT NIXON HAD ASSURED HIM THAT HE WOULD ALSO VISIT KOREA IF HE WERE TO VISIT JAPAN. AFTER CITING ADVERSE EFFECTS ON ROK MORALE AND US/ROK UNDERSTANDING IF PRESIDENT FORD SHOULD DO OTHERWISE, PRIMIN SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE KIND OF EMBARRASSMENT IT COULD CAUSE PRESIDENT FORD TO VISIT ROK AT TIME WHEN INFLUENTIAL SEGMENTS OF US SOCIETY WERE CRITICAL OF ROK DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION. HE WAS SURE, HOWEVER, THAT ALL "DOMESTIC POLITICAL OBSTACLES" WOULD BE ELIMINATED BY TIME OF VISIT. EMERGENCY MEASURE NUMBER THREE WOULD BE QUICKLY TAKEN CARE OF BY LEGISLATION IN UPCOMING ASSEMBLY SESSION AND EMERGENCY MEASURE NUMBER TWO WOULD BE RESCINDED AS SOON AS COURTS-MARTIAL HAD DEALT WITH CASES PENDING BEFORE THEM. OTHER MEASURES (UNSPECIFIED) TO AMELIORATE SITUATION ALSO IN TRAIN. IF NECESSARY, HE WOULD VISIT WASHINGTON PERSONALLY TO PROVIDE ASSURANCES OF THIS NATURE IF THAT WOULD HELP. HE FELT UNHAPPY AT THOUGHT PRIMIN TANAKA WOULD BE MEETING PRESIDENT FORD LONG BEFORE SENIOR KOREAN HAD HAD SUCH OPPORTUNITY AND REGRETTED HE HAD BEEN UNABLE, BECAUSE OF PRESS OF DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, TO SCHEDULE WASHINGTON TRIP. IF JAPAN/ROK DIFFICULTIES WERE SETTLED, HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO GO. IN FACT, HE SAID, PRESIDENT PARK ALSO COULD CONSIDER WASHINGTON VISIT NEXT YEAR.

3. IN RESPONSE PRIMIN'S SUGGESTION THAT ROKG SEND OFFICIAL INVITATION NOW, CHARGE ASSURED HIM THAT NOT NECESSARY. IT NOT CLEAR THAT PRESIDENT WOULD VISIT JAPAN AND DEPT HAD ALREADY AUTHORIZED CHARGE TO INFORM ROKG THAT ROK DESIRE FOR VISIT WILL BE GIVEN FULLEST HIGH CONFIDENTIAL

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LEVEL CONSIDERATION. CHARGE ALSO SAID THERE NO NEED FOR PRIMIN TO CONSIDER TRIP TO WASHINGTON FOR THIS PURPOSE NOR TO FEEL THAT TANAKA MEETING WITH PRESIDENT, WHICH OFFSHOOT OF TANAKA'S TRAVELS ELSEWHERE, PUT ROK AT DISADVANTAGE. ADDED THAT WASHINGTON PRINCIPALS FACE HEAVY SCHEDULE IN COMING MONTHS IN CONNECTION CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS AND ELECTIONS, UNGA, AND SIMPLY SHAKING DOWN NEW ADMINISTRATION AND WOULD DOUBTLESS APPRECIATE

BEING SPARED ANY ACTIVITY NOT ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL.

4. COMMEN: ASSURANCE OF FULLEST HIGH LEVEL CONSIDERATION WILL HOLD ROKG FOR A WHILE, BUT PRIMIN'S PITCH IN PARTICULAR INDICATES HE AND PRESIDENT ARE BECOMING FEARFUL THAT PRESIDENT MIGHT VISIT JAPAN BUT NOT ROK. IN ADDITION CUSTOMARY CONCERN LEST US APPEAR TO FAVOR JAPAN, WHICH HEIGHTENED BY CURRENT ROK/JAPAN PROBLEMS, THEY AWARE THAT POLITICAL DISSIDENTS WOULD INTERPRET FAILURE OF PRESIDENT TO COME HERE AS OVERT DISPLAY OF US DISAPPROVAL OF PARK REGIME AND ITS DOMESTIC REPRESSION.

5. ON BALANCE, WITH PRESIDENT SEEMINGLY MOVING IN DIRECTION OF MODERATION, AND PROVIDED THAT TREND CONTINUES, EMBASSY WOULD URGE THAT PRESIDENT FORD INCLUDE ROK ON ITINERARY IF HE VISITS JAPAN.

6. IN OUR DISCUSSION, PRIMIN CLEARLY INDICATED ROKG WILLINGNESS TO MOVE IN DIRECTION WE WISH RE DOMESTIC SITUATION. WE BELIEVE HE IS SINCERE IN HIS ASSURANCES THAT GOVT IS READY TO REMOVE AT LEAST SOME OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL OBSTACLES TO A VISIT. WE CAN OF COURSE PURSUE THIS SUBJECT FURTHER WITH HIM. AT SAME TIME WE BELIEVE THAT PRESIDENT SHOULD COME HERE PREPARED TO DISCUSS FRANKLY WITH PRESIDENT PARK DIFFICULTIES THAT REPRESSIVE ACTIONS CAUSE USG IN RENDERING SUPPORT TO THIS COUNTRY. FAILURE TO DO THIS - AND TO MAKE PUBLIC AWARE THAT IT HAS BEEN DONE - WOULD BE INTERPRETED HERE (BY PRESIDENT PARK AMONG OTHERS) AND ELSEWHERE AS CONDONING REPRESSIVE POLICIES AND ACTIONS. AMB HABIB IS FULLY PREPARED, OF COURSE, TO DISCUSS RAMIFICATIONS OF PRESIDENTIAL VISIT IN CONTEXT OF ROK DOMESTIC AND EXTERNAL SITUATIONS, BUT EMBASSY COULD NOT MAKE CONFIDENTIAL

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RECOMMENDATION OR COMMENT ON POSSIBILITY OF PRESIDENTIAL VISIT WITHOUT MAKING THIS POINT.
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